

with even less success, and then i start a third, slowly, snapping the cards down with determination and a sour bit of impatience. as i am nearing the end of this game i hear a creaking sound coming from inside of the house, and i know right away that my wife is stirring about, awakened no doubt by my force of play. she comes out onto the porch, standing there with dishevelled hair, at the tailend of a lengthy yawn she asks me how many games have i lost and whether i would care for any breakfast.

SEARCHING BREEZES THROUGH ME

when i get there on my bike in the last afternoon light there are not many people anymore at the fruit and vegetable stand. until christmas eve it will remain open selling trees and wreaths, working through halloween and thanksgiving, but for now it seems to be just surviving the chilly breezes of autumn. the produce has that old deep-colored soft appearance, which you would think would cause the stand to be very crowded, since all is so sensuous, so sweet and vulnerable right now. when i get there i find only the girl who usually works there, the girl with the bandage over her left eye. ever since i first started buying from this stand over a year ago i've seen that bandage over her eye and i've been tempted more than once to ask her why she has to wear it. but it is none of my business, of course, and besides she is always so friendly that i wouldn't like to see her composure change even a smidgen to have to explain something personal to me. one day, when i had brought my car, i bought a large basket of tomatoes and i remember being amazed at how scrupulously she went through the basket picking out tomatoes that were no good. her fingers moved with a tender precision that ran searching breezes through me.

that day too i wanted to ask her
about the bandage over her eye as
she was giving me my change. but
again i did not. but as i was
ready to walk away she did ask me
if i were going to eat all of
the tomatoes myself.

-- ronald baatz

Toms River NJ

THE BUS

The bus is made of shiny,
thick, convoluted metal,
and is full of shiny,
piston-like passengers.

It is very important that
you stand in the street
a long time waiting for it,
that it makes

a great clattering noise
as it approaches,
shoots foul gas
in your face as it passes

without stopping, roars on
through every red light
in town to the horizon,
getting bigger and bigger

all the way.

PALM TREES

There's a town in England
where they have palm trees
the size of tulips.
Children pick them on

the promenades and you see
them in vases on breakfast
tables. With a cat sniffing
the fronds, tiny coconuts

rolling amongst the grains
of sugar on the tablecloth,
and a miniature tropical
sun swimming in a nearby

goldfish bowl.

POETIC ROMANCE

He liked the first poem she showed him, which
encouraged her. He hated the next poem (and
was frank), and that encouraged her even more:
he really caught hell in the third poem.